

Nenets languages

Nenets (in former work also **Yurak**) is a pair of closely related languages spoken in northern Russia by the Nenets people. They are often treated as being two dialects of the same language, but they are very different and mutual intelligibility is low. The languages are Tundra Nenets, which has a higher number of speakers, spoken by some 30,000 to 40,000 people^{[4][5]} in an area stretching from the Kanin Peninsula to the Yenisei River,^[6] and Forest Nenets, spoken by 1,000 to 1,500 people in the area around the Agan, Pur, Lyamin and Nadym rivers.^{[4][5]}

The Nenets languages are classified in the Uralic language family, making them distantly related to some national languages spoken in Europe – namely Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian – in addition to other minority languages spoken in Russia. Both of the Nenets languages have been greatly influenced by Russian. Tundra Nenets has, to a lesser degree, been influenced by Komi and Northern Khanty. Forest Nenets has also been influenced by Eastern Khanty. Tundra Nenets is well documented, considering its status as an indigenous and minority language. It has a literary tradition going back to the 1930s, while Forest Nenets was first written during the 1990s and has been little documented.^[5]

Apart from the word 'Nenets', only one other Nenets word has entered the English language: 'parka', their traditional long, hooded jacket, made from skins and sometimes fur.^{[7][8]}

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Common features of Nenets languages

Tundra Nenets has 16 moods, most of which reflect different degrees of certainty in what in English might be called indicative statements or different degrees of force in what in English might be called imperative commands.^[9] An overarching feature of the Nenets languages is the introduction of systematic palatalization of almost all consonants. This originates from contrasts between different vowel qualities in the Proto-Samoyedic language.^[10]

- *Cä, *Ca → *Cʲa, *Ca

Nenets	
	ненэця’ вада <i>nenécja’ vada</i>
Native to	Russia
Region	Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Komi Republic, Murmansk Oblast
Ethnicity	44,600 Nenets people (2010 census) ^[1]
Native speakers	21,926 (2010 census) ^[2]
Language family	Uralic <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Samoyedic<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ (core)<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enets–Nenets<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Nenets
Dialects	Forest Nenets Tundra Nenets
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	y rk
Glottolog	nene1249 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/nene1249) ^[3]

- *Ce, *Cë → *C^je, *Ce
- *Ci, *Cï → *C^ji, *Ci
- *Cö, *Co → *C^jo, *Co
- *Cü, *Cu → *C^ju, *Cu

The velar consonants *k and *ŋ were additionally shifted to *s^j and *n^j when palatalized.

Similar changes have also occurred in the other Samoyedic languages spoken in the tundra zone: Enets, Nganasan and the extinct Yurats.

Differences between Tundra and Forest Nenets

Tundra Nenets generally has remained closer to Proto-Nenets than Forest Nenets, whose phonology has been influenced by eastern Khanty dialects. Changes towards the modern languages include:^{[11][10]}

- Tundra Nenets:
 - Delabialization of /w^j/ → /j/
 - Lenition of initial /k/ → /x/
 - Simplification of /ʔk/ → /k/
- Forest Nenets:
 - Initial /s/ → /x/
 - Medial denasalization of /n^j/ → /j/
 - The change of rhotics to lateral fricatives: /r/, /r^j/ → /ɬ/, /ɬ^j/
 - Shortening of geminate nasals
 - Breaking of geminate /l:/ → /nɬ/
 - Phonemicization of palatalized velars /k^j/, /x^j/, /ŋ^j/ due to vowel changes
 - Raising of non-close vowels preceding a syllable with an original close vowel
 - Loss of vowel distinctions in unstressed syllables
 - Introduction of short/long contrasts for /a/ and /æ/

References

Note

1. Nenets languages (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/yrk/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
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9. "Tundra Nenets grammatical sketch" (<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/sketch.html>). *www.helsinki.fi*. Retrieved 20 April 2018.
10. Sammallahti, Pekka (1988), "Historical phonology of the Uralic languages, with special reference to Samoyed, Ugric, and Permic", *The Uralic Languages: Description, History and Foreign Influences*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 478–554
11. Salminen, Tapani (2007), "Notes on Forest Nenets phonology" (http://www.sgr.fi/sust/sust253/sust253_salminen.pdf) (PDF), *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, Helsinki, Finland: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura (253)

External links

- Tundra Nenets website (<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/tn.html>)
 - Forest Nenets – English glossary (<https://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/3259/fnen-eng.html&date=2009-10-25+11:37:42>)
 - The Russian–Nenets Audio Phrasebook (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110721022634/http://www.speech.nw.ru/Nenets/>)
 - Comparative Nenets–Nganasan dictionary (with Russian and English equivalents) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20101014160917/http://www.speech.nw.ru/NenNgan/>)
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